



REASON & REVELATION

A Monthly Journal of Christian Evidences

FEBRUARY 2017 • VOL. 37 • NO. 2

SYSTEMATICALLY UNDERSTANDING

THE BIBLE BETTER

PART 1

New Book:

*Reasons
to Believe*

AP's

2016

Impact

HOLY
BIBLE

Systematically Understanding The Bible Better [Part 1]

HOLY
BIBLE

Eric Lyons, M.Min.

Article In Brief...



Americans are increasingly unfamiliar with the Bible and seemingly much less prepared than previous generations to rightly divide it. Truly and effectively comprehending the Scriptures requires honesty, effort, and the awareness of certain vital, elementary truths and preliminary principles of Bible study. This article offers systematic statements and principles helpful in coming to a correct understanding of the Word of God.

NEVER in world history has as much information been as easily accessible to as many people as in the 21st century. If you want to know the name of Alexander the Great's father, you can search for the answer on the World Wide Web using, for example, the Google search engine, which can search over 60 trillion Web pages at any given moment.¹ If you want to master the Rubik's cube, you can begin by searching one of several thousand Rubik's cube tutorial videos at YouTube.com. If you want to read 10 different English translations of Genesis 1:1, you can do so on-line at one of countless Bible-study Web sites in a matter of minutes (or perhaps seconds). The fact is, more people have the opportunity to acquire

more knowledge than ever before in human history.

Although we live in the information age, and though Bibles and Bible study aids are more readily available to more people, tragically, Americans are increasingly ignorant of the Word of God. According to a 2014 study conducted by the Barna Research Group and published by the American Bible Society, 88% of households in the U.S. own at least one copy of the Bible.² Furthermore, 82% of adults consider themselves at least moderately, if not highly, knowledgeable about the Bible.³ Yet, 46% of Americans (and 61% of American millennials) are "non-Bible readers."⁴ What's more, nearly 60% of Americans cannot correctly identify the first five books of the Bible, even within a multiple-choice

question.⁵ In 2013, over 50% of Americans either did not know if John the Baptist was one of the 12 apostles or actually thought (incorrectly) that he was.⁶ That same year, nearly 50% of American millennials indicated that Sodom and Gomorrah were (or might have been) married.⁷ We may live in the age of information, but sadly, Americans' general knowledge and understanding of the Bible—the most important Book on Earth—could aptly be described as the age of ignorance. The simple fact is, Americans are increasingly unaware of the contents of the Bible and unprepared to rightly divide it.

Given these facts, Apologetics Press would like to help Christians and non-Christians systematically understand the Bible better. In this article, we concisely highlight several vital truths and preliminary principles of Bible study that everyone needs to know. Think of these principles as helpful tips to remember as we seek to treat the Bible fairly and interpret it accurately. Christians who are familiar with these principles may find a review of them refreshing and an organized collection of them in one place helpful in teaching others. We hope that those who are less familiar with the Bible will find the following systematic statements and principles helpful in coming to a correct understanding of the precious, soul-saving, life-enriching truths of the Book that has blessed more lives than any other book in history, and that students will soon be reading the Bible for all that it is worth as they systematically "search the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).

#1—BE FAIR WITH THE BIBLE

EVERYONE wants to be understood. We want others to be able to comprehend what we attempt to communicate to them. Though different ages, languages, cultures, personalities, education levels, etc. can make communication among human beings difficult at times, people want to “be heard,” and they want their messages to be heard in the way in which they intend for them to be understood. When a cashier at the grocery store says, “That will be \$34.32,” he reasonably expects the customer to understand the exact cost of the groceries and to take appropriate action. When a teacher instructs her students to complete the pop quiz to the best of their ability, she rightly expects her students to comprehend her instructions and at least attempt to answer the questions before them. When a journalist writes a review of a book for a newspaper, he has realistic expectations that people will attempt to be as fair with his article as his readers should expect him to be with the book that he reviewed.

The Bible, likewise, deserves to be handled fairly. It deserves to be interpreted in a reasonable manner. The Bible, in fact, repeatedly warns of those who “keep on hearing, but do not understand” and who “keep on seeing, but do not perceive” (Isaiah 6:9).⁸ Paul wanted his readers to imitate his “simplicity and godly sincerity” and to “read” and “understand” (2 Corinthians 1:12-13). He wanted them to be “careful” and “wise,” and “understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15,17, NASB).

Many through the centuries have treated the Bible unjustly, but

common decency demands that we attempt to interpret it fairly. We should not assume the worst about the Bible writers anymore than we should assume the worst about anyone whom we are genuinely attempting to understand. If a person or a document eventually is shown to be incorrect about one or more matters, we certainly should take note of such error and respond appropriately to it. However, a person’s communications (in whatever form they may be) are to be presumed truthful and consistent until it can be shown conclusively that they are false and contradictory. This unbiased approach has been accepted throughout literary history, and is still accepted today in most venues. After all, you cannot expect to have a coherent ancient history class using Herodotus, Thucydides, Josephus, etc. if you presume that they were all liars. Respected 19th-century Harvard law professor, Simon Greenleaf, dealt with this principle in his book, *The*

Testimony of the Evangelists: The Gospels Examined by the Rules of Evidence:

The rule of municipal law on this subject is familiar, and applies with equal force to all ancient writings, whether documentary or otherwise; and as it comes first in order, in the prosecution of these inquiries, it may, for the sake of mere convenience, be designated as our first rule: “Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, **the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise.**”⁹

It is universally honorable to draw justifiable, coherent conclusions and to make “righteous judgments” (John 7:24) about people and the things they communicate.¹⁰ So why not apply the Golden Rule to our efforts at understanding any and all communication, including the Bible itself? “Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them” (Matthew 7:12). Since everyone wants to be understood in a fair

Reason & Revelation is published monthly by Apologetics Press, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Montgomery, AL. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to **Reason & Revelation**, 230 Landmark Dr., Montgomery, AL 36117; **ISSN:** [1542-0922] **USPS#** 023415.

Apologetics Press is a non-profit, tax-exempt work dedicated to the defense of New Testament Christianity. Copyright © 2017. All rights reserved.

Editor:

Dave Miller, M.A., M.Div., M.A.R., Ph.D.*
(*Communication, Southern Illinois University)

Associate Editor:

Jeff Miller, M.S., Ph.D.*
(*Biomechanical Engineering, Auburn University)

Annual Subscription Rates:

\$12.00	Domestic
\$10.00	Domestic Bulk (5+ to same address)
\$12.00	Canada & Overseas (plus shipping)

General inquiries, changes of address, or international callers:

Phone: (334) 272-8558
Fax: (334) 270-2002

Orders:

Phone: (800) 234-8558
Fax: (800) 234-2882

On-line Web store/catalog, subscription order/renewal form, current issues, archives, and other information (all orders processed on a secure server):

URL: www.ApologeticsPress.org
URL: espanol.ApologeticsPress.org/espanol
E-mail: mail@ApologeticsPress.org

Discovery—Scripture & Science for Kids is a sister publication for children. For more information, please contact our offices or visit the Discovery Web site at:
URL: www.DiscoveryMagazine.com

manner, let's **be sure to be fair with the Bible.**

#2—THE BIBLE CLAIMS TO BE DIVINELY INSPIRED

TENS of millions of books have been written throughout history, but the fact is, the claim of inspiration at the hand of God is extremely rare. Many books assert special importance, while others claim to be a kind of “creed book.” However, as Kenny Barfield noted in his book, *Why the Bible is Number 1*, apparently only seven documents are known to exist in the entire world that openly claim divine inspiration.¹¹ Sadly, misguided devotees of various religions clamor about, defending books and various writings as allegedly being “inspired of God” when, in fact, the books themselves do not even make such a claim. Take, for instance, the many Hindu writings. Of some of their most notable “sacred” texts, including the Vedas, the Laws of Manu, and the Puranas, only the section of the Vedas known as the Rig Veda claims inspiration.¹² Similarly, the Christian Science group has led many to believe that the writings of Mary Baker Eddy are inspired. Yet, even though her writings claim special importance, they never openly claim divine inspiration.¹³ Why would anyone want to follow a creed book and claim it is from God when the book itself does not even make such a claim?

Indeed, the written claim of inspiration at the hand of God is extremely rare. For this reason, one of the fundamental facts to remember in any Bible study is that the Bible claims to be, not the will of man, but “of God,” Who

“carried along by the Holy Spirit” His oral and writing prophets (2 Peter 1:20-21, NIV). This claim of divine inspiration is found, not just once or twice in the Bible, but hundreds of times. The phrase “The Lord spoke/said to Moses” is found 35 times in Leviticus alone (NKJV). King David claimed, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2). Paul wrote, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

If God exists (and there is ample evidence that He does),¹⁴ then it is reasonable to conclude that God (1) could **freely choose** to communicate to His human creation, (2) would have the **ability** (as the omnipotent Creator) to communicate to man, (3) **would choose** to reveal important information to His human creation if He expected anything from them (e.g., faith, commitment, obedience, worship, etc.), and (4) would reasonably **inform** humanity that the message was, indeed, from Him. (That is, He would not leave it up to mere guesswork as to whether or not He had ever communicated to mankind.) Indeed, unlike 99.999995% of the books on Earth,¹⁵ the Bible claims (many times) that it is from the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

There is one all-important reason for Bible students to acknowledge the Bible's claim of divine inspiration: the only reason that the Bible has any right to govern a person's life in any way is if it

is actually from the Creator of the Universe and the Judge of all mankind. Think about it: the Bible tells its readers how they should live. It instructs people what not to do (e.g., lust, hate, lie, commit sexual immorality) and what to do (e.g., be kind, loving, humble, forgiving), and then it pronounces eternal damnation on those who do not obey the words of the Bible (Galatians 5:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; Revelation 21:8). No mere human being or mere human-authored book has the authority to tell someone the things that the Bible teaches. A rational person's response to “do this or else” is, “Who exactly are you to tell me that I must obey what you are saying?” Published works that tell people to “do X, Y, and Z because I said so,” are logically met with immediate resistance. Simply put: it matters **who** says **what**—and **why**.

In truth, the Bible is crystal clear about why a person should seriously read, study, meditate upon, believe, and eventually obey its words: the Bible is not a mere man-made book, but a supernaturally inspired document—at least, that is its repeated claim. And such a spectacular claim must be acknowledged and digested early on in one's attempt to understand the Bible correctly. After all, if the Bible is not the Word of God, then it was written by pompous charlatans who should be exposed as frauds.

#3—THE BIBLE POSSESSES THE ATTRIBUTES OF DIVINE INSPIRATION

EVEN though we would expect to find that any book produced by God would claim divine inspiration, any rational person knows

that **such a claim does not prove anything in and of itself**. It is a necessary trait of inspiration, but it is not a sufficient trait. Simply because a book or writing claims divine inspiration is not positive proof of its inspiration. Any person could stand in front of an audience and claim to be the President of the United States. In fact, he could make that claim hundreds of times. But his many claims to the presidency would fail to prove his case unless he could provide adequate and sufficient evidence.

Those who penned the Bible did not expect the world to receive their writings as God's Word simply because they claimed divine inspiration (anymore than Jesus expected people to believe that He was the Messiah simply because He claimed to be—John 5:31; 10:37-38). The Bible writers insisted that their writings were not based on imaginary, unverifiable people and events, but instead were grounded on solid, verifiable facts. The apostle Peter wrote: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). In his introduction to the book of Acts, Luke stated that Jesus "presented Himself alive after His suffering by many **infallible proofs**, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3, emp. added). The Bible writers understood and insisted that the information they penned was accurate and factual, and should be accepted, not based on a lack of evidence or a "leap in

the dark," but on an abundance of verifiable proof.

So what is the proof that the Bible is of supernatural origin? Why should an honest truth-seeker come to the conclusion that the Bible is the special revelation from the Creator of the Universe? While it is beyond the scope of this article (and especially this brief section) to detail the many evidences for the Bible's inspiration, we can certainly summarize the evidences for you. In short, the main, overarching reason that the Bible is demonstrated to be of divine origin is because **the Bible writers were correct in everything they wrote—about the past, the present, and even the future**.¹⁶

Eighteenth-century English poet Alexander Pope succinctly noted in "An Essay on Criticism" what every rational person knows all too well—"to err is human."¹⁷ Even though we may set high standards for ourselves and learn all that we can, and even though we may put as many safeguards in place as is humanly possible, mistakes will be made; ignorance will be revealed; errors will occur. It simply is **humanly impossible** to be correct about everything a person says or writes. "**With God**," however, "all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

If an all-knowing, all-powerful God exists, then such a God could produce written revelation for His human creation that was flawless in its original production. He could guide uneducated men to write about events that occurred hundreds or thousands of years before their time with complete accuracy. He could "move" (otherwise) ordinary men to write flawlessly about any number of contemporary

people, places, and things. He could even guide man to write about **future** events with perfect accuracy—a humanly impossible feat. In truth, the all-encompassing reason that a person can come to the rational conclusion that the Bible is "given by inspiration of God" is because the writers of the Bible were amazingly accurate about **everything**. The very existence of the Holy Scriptures cannot be explained in any other way except to acknowledge that they are the result of an overriding, superintending, guiding Mind.

Consider how coming to the realization that the Bible is the Word of God impacts our treatment of it. If, as stated earlier, we strongly desire for our own words to be treated fairly, and if we can reasonably conclude that we should handle the communication from others with integrity, then revelation from the supreme Creator and Ruler of the Universe should be treated with the **utmost** integrity and reverence. If Shakespeare and Hawthorne are highly respected by readers, treated almost with reverence by some, how much more should we carefully and respectfully handle the Word of God?

Is there any wonder why the psalmist loved Holy Writ "more than gold, yes, than fine gold" (119:127)? Is there any question why he said, "my heart **stands in awe** of Your word" (119:161)? Are we surprised to find out that when Ezra and other Jewish leaders read from the Law of Moses "from morning until midday," that "all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law" and respectfully listened to the teachers who "gave the sense, and helped them



2016 IMPACT

AND TALKING POINTS

- The A.P. Web site continued to receive millions of page views in 2016 from individuals located in some 235 countries and territories worldwide
- A.P. App: Over 5,000 have installed the app, and over 70,000 pages have been viewed
- Over 21,000 likes on the A.P. Facebook page from over 45 countries
- Thousands of individuals, hundreds of congregations, and dozens of denominations are registered to use the A.P. Bible Class curriculum site
- Over 2,800 are registered to use A.P.'s Advanced Bible Reader

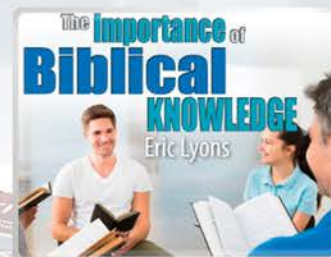
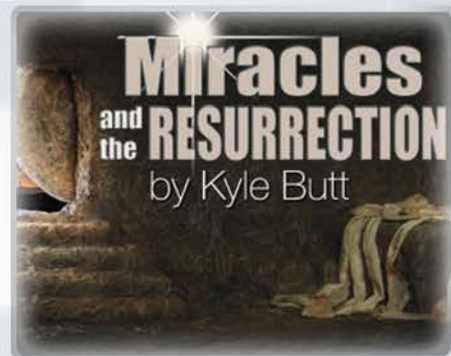
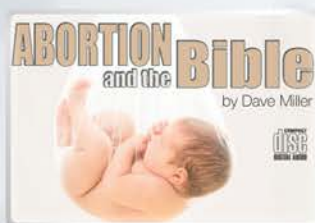
A.P. Writers/Speakers:

- Faithful Christians who hold a combined 29 graduate level degrees in relevant scientific and religious areas, including 13 doctoral degrees
- Spoke in a combined 128 cities, 22 states, and 5 foreign countries in 2016
- Participated in a Flood geologic expedition, spoke at gospel meetings, youth camps, mission trips, lectureships, conferences, seminars, and conducted radio and TV interviews

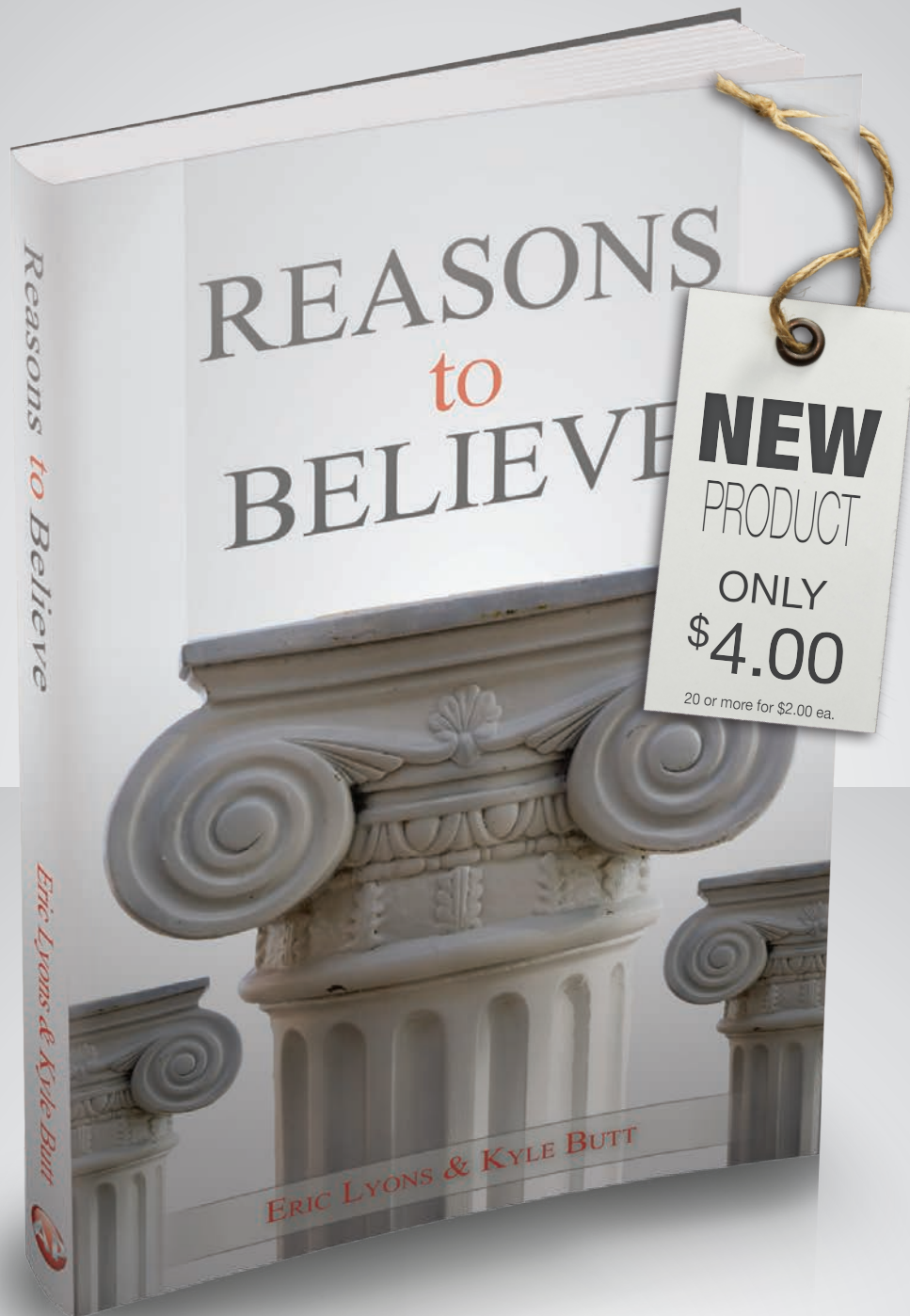
A.P. Materials:

- An immense amount of defense related materials published each year for adults, teens, and children—monthly *Reason & Revelation* journal of Christian evidences; books; tracts; correspondence courses; weekly Web articles; seminar and debate DVDs; Bible class and VBS curricula; *Valor & Virtue* magazine for teens; monthly *Discovery* magazine for kids; Learn to Read books and toddler Creation Cards; and *Digger Doug's Underground* television show for kids

A.P. is unique among evangelistic efforts in its focus and notable outreach. Every dollar of support that goes to A.P. aids in sending the message to hundreds of thousands of people who line up to access A.P. materials every year. Don't just invest in your physical retirement. Invest in the spiritual retirement of thousands of others, as well as your own!



NEW Evangelism Tool



unbelief

Apologetics Press, Inc.

230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117-2752

Orders: (800) 234-8558

Fax: (334) 270-2002

E-mail: mail@ApologeticsPress.org - Web Site: www.ApologeticsPress.org

Chapter Titles:

- 7 Reasons to Believe in God
- 3 Reasons to Believe the Bible is from God
- 5 Reasons to Believe in Jesus
- 4 Reasons to Do More Than Just Believe

to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:3,5,8)? And why did the “fair-minded” Bereans take the time and effort to “search the Scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11)? For the same reason we all should: The Bible is divinely inspired and deserves to be interpreted fairly, carefully, and with the utmost respect.

#4—THE NEED FOR A RELIABLE BIBLE TRANSLATION

THE Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.¹⁸ So unless you can read and understand these languages, a good Bible translation is essential to a proper understanding of the Scriptures. Everyone understands the importance of translation work in international travel, business, and politics. No serious, sane person visits a foreign country and asks for the worst translators possible. If people have a choice, they will always choose the best translators that they can afford for their particular purposes. When two international companies meet to discuss a partnership or merger, language cannot be a barrier to understanding the minute details of the terms of agreement.¹⁹ When the leaders of two countries on the brink of war meet to discuss the possibility of peace, the translation work is critical. In a very real sense, life and death are in the hands of the translators, and they are expected to perform their work as honestly and flawlessly as humanly possible.

In the Bible, God has set before His readers, as He did before the Israelites, “life and death, blessing and cursing” (Deuteronomy 30:19). Jesus said, “[H]e who hears My word and believes in Him

Who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24). The fact is, the immortal soul of every accountable human being depends upon his or her understanding and faithful acceptance of the Gospel of Christ. However, for most people, a proper reading of the Gospel **in one’s own language** is required. Thus, translations matter!

Some translations are more literal²⁰—a more word-for-word translation, which “attempts to follow the form of the original document very closely in verbal and grammatical order.”²¹ Other translations are less literal,²² but are often more reader friendly. Such a translation “attempts to reproduce in the English reader the same understanding of meaning and degree of impact and challenge that the original Hebrew and Greek audiences experienced when the Scriptures were first produced. This is accomplished through a thought-for-thought, meaning-for-meaning, translation style.”²³ Still other translations²⁴ (which we do not recommend) are “almost colloquial or paraphrastic in places,” and “free in word choice.”²⁵ Thankfully, as Dave Miller noted, “generally speaking, most translations do not differ on the **essentials**. Most English versions convey these essentials: (1) what one must do to be saved and (2) what one must do to stay saved. As imperfect as translations might be, most still convey this basic information.”²⁶ That said, we would recommend that Bible students use a more literal word-for-word translation as their primary study Bible and a somewhat less literal, thought-for-thought

translation as a secondary Bible, which one might use and consult as he would a good commentary or other helpful study aids.

An Example of a Potentially Perilous Bible Translation

The *New World Translation* (NWT) of the New Testament was first published by the Jehovah’s Witnesses Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in 1950. It is a translation **by** Jehovah Witnesses and largely **for** Jehovah’s Witnesses. (In fact, I’ve never met anyone who is not a Jehovah’s Witness who uses the NWT as their primary Bible.) Although Jehovah’s Witnesses are some of the nicest, most zealous, religious people in the world, they advocate some very dangerous doctrines, including and especially the idea that Jesus is not divine and thus not worthy of man’s worship.²⁷

For example, Jehovah’s Witnesses Watchtower Bible and Tract Society has attempted to circumvent the obvious references to Jesus accepting worship by changing the word “worship” in their translation of the New Testament to “obeisance” every time the Greek word *proskuneo* (the most prominent word for worship in the New Testament) is used in reference to Jesus. Over 30 times in the NWT *proskuneo* is correctly translated “worship” when God the Father is the recipient of glory and praise. This Greek word occurs 14 times in the New Testament in reference to Jesus, yet **not once** does the NWT render it “worship;” instead, every time it is translated “obeisance.” Allegedly, Mary Magdalene, the apostles, the blind man whom Jesus healed, etc., never worshiped

Jesus (which would imply His deity); rather, they only paid “obedience” to Him (cf. John 9:38).

In a section in which the writer of Hebrews exalted Jesus above the heavenly hosts, he affirmed that even the angels worship Christ. He wrote: “Let all the angels of God worship (*proskuneo*) Him.” The KJV, ASV, NKJV, NASB, ESV, NIV, RSV and a host of other translations render *proskuneo* in this verse as “worship.” How does the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ NWT render this passage? Unfortunately, as with all other times in the NWT when Jesus is mentioned as being the object of *proskuneo*, the word is translated “do obedience,” not “worship.” Hebrews 1:6 reads: “Let all God’s angels **do obedience** to him” (NWT).²⁸

Although no Bible translation is perfect,²⁹ and although the Truth of God’s Word can be learned from most translations, there are some translations (such as the NWT) that Bible students should be strongly discouraged from using as their primary Bible.³⁰ Indeed, the choice of one’s Bible translation is a serious matter. There may not be a perfect one, and there certainly is plenty of room for a variety of translations from which we may study and learn, but we should definitely take the choice of translations seriously.

#5—BREAK DOWN THE BIBLE IN ORDER TO BUILD UP UNDERSTANDING

RECENTLY I spoke with an intelligent young man who had just left a college class that he had never taken, taught by a professor he did not know, who used terminology the student had never

heard and a textbook he had never read. (He didn’t even understand the title of the textbook.) The student was “lost” and appeared as if he was about to have a panic attack. Why? Because of his unfamiliarity with the subject matter and the scholarly language with which it was presented.

Having an awareness of this young man’s Christian character, intellectual abilities, as well as his work ethic, I assured him (what I’ve been told at various times in my life) “everything was going to be okay.” He just needed to slow down, start from the beginning, and take “baby steps.” He needed to break down the intimidating terminology and concepts in order to start slowly building up a reasonable understanding of the subject matter.

If 46% of Americans are “non-Bible readers” and nearly 60% of Americans cannot correctly identify the first five books of the Bible, even within a multiple choice question, do you think that there may be more than a few Americans who, upon being handed a Bible and

asked to read it, may be as puzzled by the Bible as the aforementioned college student was by his first day of class? Likely tens of millions of Americans would be lost on the first day of “Bible class.” However, they **can** learn the Gospel! They **can** come to “the knowledge of the Truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). They just need (a) an open heart, and (b) to begin by learning some foundational, fundamental truths about the Bible itself.

Breaking Down the Bible

The Bible is composed of two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is composed of 39 books³¹ penned by approximately 32 different men³² over a period of about 1,100 years (from approximately 1,500 B.C. to about 400 B.C.). The Old Testament covers over 3,500 years of human history (from the Creation to the Jews’ return to Jerusalem following 70 years of Babylonian captivity) and may be divided into five parts: (1) Books of the Law of Moses (Genesis-Deuteronomy); (2)

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Kyle Butt

February 8	Jackson, TN	(731) 664-7811
February 19	Chattanooga, TN	(423) 413-5090
February 22	Tanner, AL	(256) 679-7152
February 24-25	Pigeon Forge, TN	(256) 710-7671

Eric Lyons

February 6	Henderson, TN	(800) 348-3481
February 17-19	Fayetteville, NC	(910) 425-1108

Dave Miller

February 1,8,12	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
February 15,22	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985

Jeff Miller

February 5,12	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985
February 19,26	Montgomery, AL	(334) 264-2985

Books of History (Joshua-Esther); (3) Books of Poetry (Job-Song of Solomon); (4) Books of the Major Prophets (Isaiah-Daniel); and (5) Books of the Minor Prophets (Hosea-Malachi).

The Old Testament refers to two major law systems: (1) the Law of Moses (which was given only to the Israelites—and to those Gentiles, called proselytes, who converted to Judaism), and (2) the law that governed all men from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, and only Gentiles (non-Jews) from Adam until the Christian dispensation began. Although the Bible does not give this law a “proper name,” it has come to be known as “the Patriarchal Law.”³³

The New Testament is composed of 27 books penned by eight different writers over a period of about 50 years (from approximately A.D. 50-100). The New Testament can be broken down sensibly into four parts: (1) The Life of Jesus (Matthew-John); (2) A history of the first 30 years of the church of Christ (Acts); (3) Letters (Romans-Jude); and (4) Prophecy (Revelation).

The New Testament is “the Law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2) under which **all men** (Jews and Gentiles) live today (Ephesians 2:11-22). This law is universal in scope; it is addressed to “all nations” and is to be obeyed by both Jews and Gentiles (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; cf. Acts 1:8; Acts 17:30). Bible students should still read, meditate upon, and learn from the Old Testament (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 3:16-17), but we must all recognize that Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) for all

men everywhere. Jesus fulfilled the Law (Matthew 5:17), and ever since He died in about A.D. 30, His Will (not the Old Law of Moses nor Patriarchal Law) has been in force (Hebrews 9:14-17).

The Old Testament and the New Testament are different, and the books that make them up are distinctive. Understanding these differences will help the Bible student get a better initial and overall grasp of the Bible. Yet, the student of the Scriptures must always keep in mind that one central theme runs throughout Holy Writ—God’s plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.³⁴ From the first messianic prophecy in Genesis 3:15 to Malachi’s prophecy (3:1; 4:5) of the one who would come to prepare the way for the Messiah, the Old Testament tells us through promises, prophecies, and word pictures that “the Savior is coming.” Then, some four hundred years after the close of the Old Testament, the first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) were written to testify to the truth that, indeed, “Jesus, the Savior, came,” while Acts-Revelation testify to the fact that “Jesus will come again.” And, in light of such a day, God calls all people to humble themselves and submit to His Will (1 Peter 5:5-7) while we still have an opportunity (Revelation 22:17).

[to be continued]

ENDNOTES

¹ See *Google Inside Search*, September 27, 2016, <https://www.google.com/insidesearch/howsearchworks/thestory/>.

² “The State of the Bible” (2014), American Bible Society, p. 9, <http://www.americanbible.org/uploads/content/>

[state-of-the-bible-data-analysis-american-bible-society-2014.pdf](http://www.americanbible.org/uploads/content/state-of-the-bible-data-analysis-american-bible-society-2014.pdf).

³ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴ Ibid., p. 11. The Barna research group classifies “non-Bible readers” as those who read the Bible less than three times a year outside of a church service or event.

⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

⁶ “The State of the Bible” (2013), American Bible Society, p. 66, <http://www.americanbible.org/uploads/content/State%20of%20the%20Bible%20Report%202013.pdf>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cf. Isaiah 43:8; Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26-27; Romans 11:8.

⁹ Simon Greenleaf (1995), *The Testimony of the Evangelists* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Classics), p. 16, emp. added.

¹⁰ Even though some thieves, murderers, and other unruly individuals may brag about their unjust conduct, they still want to be understood and treated fairly.

¹¹ Kenny Barfield (1997), *Why the Bible is Number 1* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers), p. 186.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Eric Lyons and Kyle Butt (2014), “7 Reasons to Believe in God,” Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=12&article=5045&topic=93>. See also the “Existence of God” section of ApologeticsPress.org.

¹⁵ If there are approximately 130 million books on Earth (as Google indicates; <https://googleblog.blogspot.com/2010/08/you-can-count-number-of-books-in-world.html>), and only seven of them claim divine inspiration, then only about 0.000005% of books in existence claim to be inspired of God.

¹⁶ For specific evidences on the inspiration of the Bible, see Kyle Butt (2007), *Behold! The Word of God* (Montgomery, AL: Apologetics Press). See also the “Inspiration of the Bible” section of ApologeticsPress.org.

¹⁷ Alexander Pope (1709), “An Essay on Criticism,” http://language.umd.edu/myl/ldc/ling001/pope_crit.htm.

- ¹⁸ The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with only small portions penned in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek with an occasional Aramaic word.
- ¹⁹ That is, language must not be any more of a barrier than it already innately is.
- ²⁰ E.g., the *American Standard Version*.
- ²¹ “Formal Equivalence” (2016), <http://tyndalearchive.com/scriptures/www.innvista.com/scriptures/glossary/formal.htm>.
- ²² E.g., *New International Version; New Century Version*.
- ²³ “Dynamic Equivalence” (2016), <http://tyndalearchive.com/scriptures/www.innvista.com/scriptures/glossary/dynamic.htm>.
- ²⁴ E.g., *Today’s English Version; The Message*.
- ²⁵ “Free Dynamic Versions” (2016), <http://tyndalearchive.com/scriptures/www.innvista.com/scriptures/glossary/dynamic.htm>.
- ²⁶ Dave Miller (2015), “3 Good Reasons to Believe the Bible Has Not Been Corrupted,” Apologetics Press, <https://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=13&article=5196&topic=103, emp. in orig>.
- ²⁷ See Eric Lyons (2015), “Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Worship of Jesus,” *Reason & Revelation*, 35[11]:122-125, 128, November, <http://apologeticspress.org/apPubPage.aspx?pub=1&issue=1206>.
- ²⁸ Interestingly, however, the NWT has not always rendered *proskuneo* in Hebrews 1:6 as “do obeisance.” When Jehovah’s Witnesses’ Watchtower Bible and Tract Society first printed the NWT in 1950, the verse actually rendered *proskuneo* as “worship” instead of “do obeisance.” Even the revised 1961 edition of the NWT translated *proskuneo* as “worship.” But, by 1971, Jehovah’s Witnesses had changed Hebrews 1:6 to read: “Let all God’s angels **do obeisance** to him.”
- ²⁹ The open and honest imperfections of man’s translation work should not disturb us so as to think that we must have an absolutely perfect translation in order to know the Truth and please God. As Dave Miller observed about the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament translated

around 250 B.C., “Though considered by scholars as an imperfect translation of the Hebrew, most of the direct quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament are taken from the Septuagint. Hence, the Bible gives implicit divine endorsement to the use of imperfect, manmade translations, further implying that God’s Word has been adequately transmitted down through the centuries via translation” (Ibid.).

- ³⁰ For a brief, balanced, non-technical study of translations, we recommend Wayne Jackson’s booklet titled, *The Bible Translation Controversy* (1995) (Stockton, CA: Courier Publications).

³¹ “The Hebrews divided their Scriptures, 24 books total, into three sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings.... The order and numbering of the Hebrew Bible is different from the Old Testament, which explains why they list 24 books, while we list 39. The Law consisted of the five books of the Torah, exactly like our English Bible. The Prophets contained Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve [Minor—EL] Prophets, in that order. They considered these eight books, but we divide Samuel into two parts, Kings into two parts, and the Twelve Prophets into their respective parts—yielding a new number of twenty-one books out of the same set of the Prophets. [NOTE: Stephen, in Acts 7:42-43, quotes from Amos 5:25-27 and cites it as the Book of the Prophets, showing how the Minor Prophets were considered a single composite work.] Finally, the Hebrew Bible placed Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra, and Chronicles in the Writings. Our Bibles divide Ezra into two books (Ezra and Nehemiah) and Chronicles into two books. This order in the Hebrew Bible follows a rough chronology of authorship, based on Jewish tradition” [“The Canon and Extra Canonical Writings” (2003), Apologetics Press, <http://apologeticspress.org/APContent.aspx?category=13&article=968&topic=103>].

³² “The Authorship of the Bible” (2016), <http://www.ukapologetics.net/12/>

authorship.htm.

- ³³ The English term “patriarch” derives from the Greek *patriarches*, which actually is made of two words—*pater*, meaning “father,” and *arches*, meaning “head” or “founder.” A patriarch is “the head of a father’s house—the founder or ruler of a tribe, family, or clan” [“Patriarch” (1986), *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson)].

Other than Christianity and Judaism, there has been but one other law, through the ages, under which God accepted worship: This was the “patriarchal” system that had continued since commands were first given in Eden. Adam, Eve, and their non-Judean descendants were under some kind of law, for the apostle Paul stated, “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Romans 4:15). For the Gentiles to have been guilty of sin (which we know they were—Romans 3:10, 23), they must have transgressed some law. What law was it? It was not the Law of Moses, because they were not amenable to that law (either because it had not yet been established or because they were not descendants of Abraham). What’s more, it was not the Law of Christ, because that Law did not come into effect until the first century A.D.

Although there still is much we do not understand about the Patriarchal Law (e.g., what direct revelations they received, what “laws” were passed down from generation to generation, etc.), we can know that the Gentiles were under a law (that was not the Law of Moses nor the Law of Christ), because they were guilty of “transgression” (Romans 4:15; 5:13), just as all men are. And if there is transgression, then there must be some law. Man has given this law a name—patriarchy.

- ³⁴ In order to get a better overall understanding of the Bible, we highly recommend Frank Chesser’s book, *Portrait of God: Viewing the Divine Through His Work of Redemption* (2004), (Huntsville, AL: Publishing Designs), <http://www.apologeticspress.org/store/Product.aspx?pid=260>.



NOTE FROM

The Editor

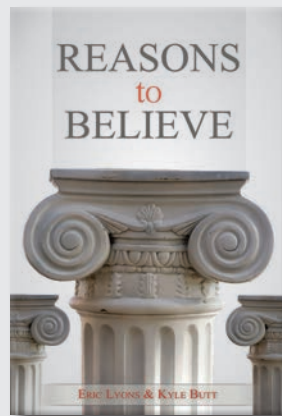


New Evangelism Tool

Part 1 of the main article in this issue of *R&R* addresses very fundamental matters pertaining to a proper understanding of the Bible. As more people become biblically illiterate and unfamiliar with Scripture, the greater the need to present to all who will consider the basic principles that will help them to come to grips with God's Word. In that same vein, we are delighted to announce that we have just published a new book that promises to be an outstanding and effective tool for evangelism. Titled *Reasons to Believe*, this book includes three tracts previously published by AP and a new one that, together, address the most foundational issues pertaining to belief in the Christian religion. The book addresses the following subjects:

- 7 Reasons to Believe in God
- 3 Reasons to Believe the Bible is from God
- 5 Reasons to Believe in Jesus
- 4 Reasons to Do More than Just Believe

Allow me to urge you, not only to secure your own copy of this dynamic literary production, but also



to purchase additional copies and pass them out to friends, family, coworkers, and any others that you encounter who might be willing to consider the truths contained therein.

On another note, in the centerspread section of this issue of *R&R*, we have summarized some of the details of our efforts in 2016 to reach out to the world with the Gospel. We are very grateful to God that He continues to bless this organization with avenues of outreach by which many thousands are reached with critical information that points them to Him as the One to Whom all will one day give account. You can help with this outreach by providing subscriptions of this journal for those whom you think might be willing to receive it. Contact our offices for assistance.

Dave Miller

**See Center Spread
for More Details**